



Minutes for Charlotte County Tourist Development Council

Date: Friday, October 9, 2020

Location: B-106 Conference Room, Murdock Administration Building

Members Present:

Kathy Burnam
Commissioner Bill Truex
Councilmember Jaha Cummings
David Haynes
Robin Madden
Mayor Nancy Prafke
Janet Watermeier

Staff Present:

Sean Doherty, Interim Director of Tourism,
Lena Applegate, Admin Services Coordinator
Jennifer Huber, Public Relations Manager
Julie Pennock, Marketing Assistant
Dan Roe, Tax Collector's Office
Elie Fischhof, Fiscal Services
Lori Tetreault, Deputy County Attorney
Emily Lewis, Deputy County Administrator

Members Absent:

Keith Farlow

Guests:

Lois Croft, Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association
Chip Futch, Aqua Marketing & Communications
Katie Varano, Aqua Marketing & Communications
Courtney Babic, Aqua Marketing & Communications

Call to Order/Roll Call

Commissioner Bill Truex called the Charlotte County Tourist Development Council (TDC) meeting to order at 9:01 a.m.

Citizen Input

Lena Applegate read into record an email update from Kaley Miller, Punta Gorda Airport. Ms. Miller reported that Punta Gorda Airport continues to regain passenger traffic. Allegiant recently added flights to Houston Hobby and Chicago Midway airports. Miller reported that at the October 15 Board Meeting, Airport Authority will award the contract for the new General Aviation Center construction. PGD will be seeking restaurateurs in early 2021 that are interested in building out the interior space and operating a restaurant, bar and catering service.

Sean Doherty read into record a text update from Jim Finch, Charlotte Harbor Event & Conference Center. Mr. Finch advised a concert was recently held without issues and the crowd was socially distanced. There was a total of 426 tickets sold.

Lois Croft, Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association (FRLA), reported on the continued efforts and discussions surrounding the \$15 minimum wage – Amendment 2.

Tourist Development Tax Reports

The tax collector report was presented by Dan Roe. Roe reported on collections for July through August 2020 of \$592,618.82. There were 530 total suspect accounts on file with no inactive suspect accounts in the fourth quarter. Total revenue from October 2019 through August 2020 was \$4,176,549.80. There is a total of 2995 properties compared to the 3043 from the last quarter which is a decrease of 48 properties.

The fiscal report was presented by Elie Fischhof. Fischhof reported that last year's budget was set at \$2.8 million of which \$2.4 million was spent. This is approximately 87% of the anticipated expenditures. Mr. Fischhof also reported that the Conversant expenditure will be fully reimbursed by the CARES Act.

Aqua Marketing & Communications//Recovery Plan Status Update

Chip Futch, Director of Digital Services and Business Intelligence, and team provided a detailed update on the recovery plan. Futch presented campaign data results for the various digital ad platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TripAdvisor. Futch also presented a new dashboarding system that will be available to the tourism staff to provide various data and metrics related to digital ad campaigns, public relation efforts and travel research data.

Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of the August 14, 2020 meeting was made by Kelly Williamson. Jaha Cummings seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Director/Staff Reports

Sean Doherty, Director of Tourism, advised that the new marketing manager and sales manager have been hired. Maureen Morgenthien and Sean Walter will report to their new positions starting in October. Doherty provided a brief update on the new digital platform Conversant and how it has helped hyper target interested audiences. Doherty also provided an update on potential co-op opportunities with Allegiant and Visit Florida.

Doherty continued to provide a high-level overview of the Downs & St. Germain third quarter research report. The research report showed that 27% of the visitors recalled seeing the VCB's ads and 75% of those people were influenced to visit based on those ads.

Jennifer Huber, Public Relations Manager, reported on a new partner engagement opportunity. Takeover Tuesdays allows the partners to create social media content that is posted on the VCB's various social media sites for one day. This gives the partner another avenue of audience engagement to highlight and promote their business in an authentic way.

Council Comments

- Councilmember Jaha Cummings advised that the Lamborghini dealership in Sarasota County expressed an interest in doing an event with the Rays to create public demand and provide a good community event.
- Janet Watermeier advised that the Visual Arts Center recently went to full time hours of operations. Watermeier also advised that a decision was made to host the Peace River National Art Festival. This event was originally scheduled in March and is now scheduled for December 5 and 6, 2020.

- Kathy Burnam reported that Fishermen's Village team is actively putting up all the lights for the Festival of Lights. A decision was made not to hold a lighting of the village ceremony due to COVID-19. Burnam also reported that suite rentals are going very well.
- Robin Madden reported that sales June through September 2020 are better than they have been in the last four years. Madden also reported that real estate inventory is very low due to the increase in sales activity.
- Mayor Nancy Prafke advised that Punta Gorda has eased the mask ordinance. Mayor Prafke also advised that the membership drive for the PicklePlex is doing extremely well with over 300 memberships having been purchased to date. The memberships are helping the PicklePlex meet operating expenses. The World Pickleball Championship is scheduled for February. However, larger events need more courts than the PicklePlex offers. The immediate need for the PicklePlex to host these larger events is to build eight more courts.
- David Haynes reported that rentals are still on the rise. Haynes also reported sales activities are at an all-time high. The house inventory is at about 25% of their typical inventory.
- Kelly Williamson reported that in June the hotel was at an 80% capacity which was up over last year. There were cancellations in July due State closures. Williamson advised that the hotel has seen excellent pick up due to the incoming tournaments such as the BMX event. More wedding and event inquiries have picked up.
- Commissioner Bill Truex advised that the construction business is doing very well. However, cost for lumber is up and the supply chain has been cut. Timeframe windows have been extended out to twelve weeks or more for things such as appliances and cabinetry. This is mainly due to the cut backs on the manufacturing processes.

Adjournment

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 10:16 a.m.

Next TDC Meeting

The next TDC meeting is at 9 a.m. Friday, December 11, 2020. The meeting will be held in the B-106 Conference Room, Murdock Administration Building, 18500 Murdock Circle, Port Charlotte.